

6th Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23.

**Hymns: 564, 267, 507, 197, 283, 515.**

**INTROIT: Psalm 65:1-8**

P You receive praise in silence in Zion,

**C O God, and vows to You will be fulfilled.**

P O You who hear prayer,

**C To You all human beings will come.**

P Iniquitous things have been prevailing over me.

**C You Yourself will provide atonement for our rebellious actions.**

P Blessed is the person whom You choose and whom You bring near, that he may dwell in Your courts!

**C We shall be satisfied with the good things of Your house, the holiness of Your temple.**

P You answer us in righteousness with awesome deeds, O our saving God,

**C the Confidence of all the ends of the earth and of the most distant sea.**

P He is the One who sets the mountains in place by His strength,

**C the One who puts on strength like a waistcloth.**

P He is the One who calms the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves,

**C and the turmoil of the peoples.**

P Those who live at the ends of the earth have been in awe of Your miraculous signs.

**All You make the places where morning dawns and the places where evening fades shout for joy.**

**COLLECT:** Blessed Lord, since You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that we may embrace and ever hold fast to the blessed hope of ever lasting life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C Amen.**

**Readings**

**Old Testament: Isaiah 55:10-13.**

**Epistle: Romans 8:12-17.**

**Gospel: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23.**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **Amen.**

The text for our sermon for this morning is written in the book of Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 which was our Gospel reading before.

**1** That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat down beside the sea. **2** However, such large crowds gathered around Him that He got into a boat and sat in it, while the entire crowd was standing on the shore. **3** Then He told them many things in parables. He said, "Look! A sower went out to sow. **4** While he was sowing, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. **5** Other seeds fell on the stony places, where they did not have much soil. Because their soil was not deep, the seeds came up quickly. **6** However, when the sun rose, they were scorched, and, because they had no root, they withered. **7** Other seeds fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them. **8** However, other seeds fell on the good soil and produced grain, some a hundred, some sixty, and some thirty times as much. **9** Let the one who has ears listen!"

**18** "Therefore hear the parable of the sower! **19** When anyone hears the Word of the kingdom but does not understand it, the Evil One comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This one is he who has been sown along the path. **20** The one who has been sown on the stony places is the one who hears the Word and immediately receives it with joy; **21** but he does not have root in himself. He lasts for only a short time, and, when trouble or persecution comes because of the Word, he immediately

falls away. <sup>22</sup> The person who has been sown among thorns is one who hears the Word, but the worry of the world and the seduction that comes from riches choke the Word, and it does not produce anything. <sup>23</sup> However, the person who has been sown on the good soil is the one who hears the Word and understands it, and so produces and yields, sometimes a hundred, sometimes sixty, and sometimes thirty times as much.”

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Peace be with you.

Those of you who have had major surgery know that the hospital staff will get you up and walking as quickly as possible. There is a problem however. It's hard to get up and around with all the, IV's and tubing attached to your body. If you want to take a walk, you need a helper to make sure that all the tubes and stuff don't get tangled up or have any other problems. That's how it was the last time I was in the hospital, I needed a helper when I wanted to go to the - you know what!

One of the student nurses was a young man from somewhere in Africa. When this young man learned that I was a pastor, he asked a very good question: “When I came to this country, I noticed a lot of churches, and when I went looking for a place to worship I found that, the ones I visited were nearly empty on Sundays. How is it that a country that has so many churches be like that? What is wrong with the churches?”

The parable of the sower that we heard in today's Gospel was the first thing that came to my mind. When it comes to the problems that we have in the World's Christian Churches today, Jesus nails it on the head with the parable of the sower.

Jesus told a story of a sower generously throwing seed on four different types of soil: the hard path, rocky soil, weedy soil, and good soil. He then explained that this seed is the Word of God. The hard path represent people who have hard hearts where the Word of God does nothing and the devil steals it away quickly. The rocky soil represented people who got very excited about being in the Church, but they weren't interested in letting the Word put its roots deep into the heart. The weedy soil represented people who were also excited about being in the Church, but the things of this world prevented the Word from putting its roots deep into their heart's. Until finally, there's the good soil that represents people who do nothing themselves, - but the Word put its roots down deep and these are the ones who produced a yield. They are the ones who go to Church to be nourished by God's Word.

Now, it's really easy to criticize the people who have no exposure to the Word of God because it does not penetrate and the devil steals it away. That would be OK if we were interested in the pagans outside in the world. But my African friend asked what was wrong in the Church. If there are so many churches, why haven't they had an effect on our society?

Here we have to look at the rocks and the weeds. When we examine the state of the Church in the World and indeed here in Australia, we see a lot of pastors who are satisfied to let their members be rocky or weedy soil.

The rocky soil represents people who are not interested in having the Word of God send its roots deep into their hearts. Jesus said, **The one who has been sown on the stony places is the one who hears the Word and immediately receives it with joy;** These people actually become Christians for a little while. At first, things are looking pretty good. Then Jesus said, **"but he does not have root in himself. He lasts for only a short time, and, when trouble or persecution comes because of the Word, he immediately falls away."** So their faith doesn't last. Why, because the Word of God had no root. Here are the people who skip worship for weeks on end, and don't attend Bible studies. They resist the opportunity to let the Word grow deep into the heart.

The rocky soil more than any other describes the state of Christianity in the World today. When Jesus rose from the dead He spoke to His disciples and said, **“This is what Scripture has said: ‘The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day; <sup>47</sup> and on the basis of His name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’** [Luke 24:46-47.] When we

look at what passes for the proclamation of Christ's message in most Australian churches, we don't hear the proclamation of repentance and the forgiveness of sins in the name of Christ. Instead we hear what I would like to call Happy Clappy Christianity.

Now what do I mean by that? Well people who go there say things like "I like it because it's fun, and the songs *"the hymns,"* have a good beat, and you can dance to it, and nobody tells me that I'm a sinner." Nobody cared if there was a message in the words. For the most part, you couldn't understand the words. But it was a fun song.

Now, that's all well and good if you are judging top forty hits. On the other hand, it is a disaster when churches are seeking to be popular instead of faithful ... when churches are seeking to be fun instead of informative. Who cares if the preacher proclaims repentance and the forgiveness of sins? All we want is something that is fun, has a good beat and you can dance to it. Such a proclamation has no root and when trouble comes, it has no help or comfort. Sadly, this is the state of quite a lot of churches in the World today. This is the answer to the question, "How is it that this country can have so many churches and still be empty, virtually a non-worshipping country? so morally evil?"

Jesus also spoke of a weedy field. Here it's the cares of the world. The excuse here is a variation on the simple phrase, *"I'm too busy."* One of the variations of this phrase is, *"I'll be in church when I have a little more time."* In this case a person is saying, *"There are one or more things in my life that are more important than God."* Basically it's simple idolatry. Do you have to watch the game? Well, then the game is really your god. Did you stay out a little too late partying Saturday night? Then partying is really your god. What prevents them from coming here in order to be with Jesus and receive His gifts? Why do they resist the gifts of studying God's Word in Bible study? Why do they miss out on the gifts God gives in Divine Service? Whatever excuse they give ... that is their god.

The really sad thing about the rocky soil and the weedy soil is that these people actually believe that they are Christians. But notice that Jesus says these soils produce no fruit. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught, **"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father, who is in heaven. Many will ask Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and in Your name driven out demons, and in Your name performed many miracles?' Then I shall tell them frankly, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who do what is evil!' [Matthew 7:21-23.]**

There will be many people who feel that they are faithful Christians ... right up until they stand before the Lord. Only then will they discover the tragedy that they are rocky or weedy soil. What a tragedy it will be when death brings them before the last judge and He says, "You didn't have time for me when you were alive. Now that you are dead, I don't have eternity for you. I never knew you; depart from me, you worker of lawlessness."

Finally, there is the good soil. Jesus states that the Word of God makes its way deep into the heart. This is the means that the Holy Spirit uses to make His way deep into the heart. Jesus said, **"However, the person who has been sown on the good soil is the one who hears the Word and understands it, and so produces and yields, sometimes a hundred, sometimes sixty, and sometimes thirty times as much."** Finally, there is fruit. For those of you that are here this morning, here there is faith that withstands the challenges of hard times. Here is faith that receives comfort in the hardest times.

Why does Jesus teach that studying the Word of God is so important? The Apostle Paul answers that question in his letter to the church in Rome. "For I am not ashamed of the Good News. For it is the power of God to save everyone who believes it, the Jew first, and also the Gentile." [Romans 1:16.] When faithful pastors encourage people to study the Word of God they are merely saying that they want their members to have the power of God to salvation.

This is the salvation that Jesus Christ earned for us with His holy life and His sacrifice on the cross. This is the salvation that Jesus Christ earned for us when He died on the cross. This is the salvation that Jesus Christ earned for us when He took the punishment of our sin onto Himself, and gave us the righteousness of His life to take its place. This is the salvation that our risen Lord wants to give to us freely through His Word. When people reject the opportunity to study God's Word, they are rejecting the means by which the

Holy Spirit works salvation in us. They are in danger of committing the unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit.

In today's Gospel, Jesus simply tells us that He wants His Word to put its roots deep into our hearts. He wants that Word to go deep so that His salvation will go just as deep. When the faithful pastor encourages you to attend Bible Study, He's simply saying, "I love you enough to want you to have more Jesus and more of His salvation." Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

**C Amen.**

**3rd Hymn: 507,**

### **Prayer of the Church 7th Sunday after Pentecost 2017**

P As those who are children and heirs of God, let us call upon Him with full confidence that we will be heard.

*Brief silence*

P Almighty Father, the Word goes forth from Your mouth and does not return to You empty. Provide for the continued proclamation of Your Word, that those who do not yet know You may come to join us in the confession of Your name, so that together we may go out in joy and be led forth in peace. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Almighty Father, You have planted Your Word within us, watered us with the promises of Baptism, and nourished us in the good soil of Your Church. Keep us ever faithful to that which You have given us, and let us never fall away from You. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Almighty Father, all the nations of the earth are Yours, and besides You there is no other God. Give those who lead, the desire for peace and stability and a concern to govern wisely. Let them plead the cause of the widow and orphan and serve the needs of the least among them. Bring an end to war and strife, and allow all to live in peace and safety. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Almighty Father, look with mercy upon those who suffer from illness of body or mind. [*Be especially with* .] Comfort them with Your presence. Give them healing if it be Your will; patience to endure suffering; and knowledge that no matter what they go through, they are Your dear children and that the glory of Christ awaits them. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Almighty Father, we gather again at the table of Your Son to receive His body and blood in the blessed Sacrament. May we eat and drink in faith, receiving that which was given and shed for us for our benefit. Let what we receive here strengthen us in our trust in You and our service toward others. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P We join our prayer and praise with that of all generations of the faithful who have called You Father and are now before Your throne of grace. Bring us at last with them together into the life that awaits us at the coming of Your Son, Jesus, who reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end.

**C Amen.**

**4th Hymn: 197.**